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Statement

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

by Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman on the North American Free Trade Agreement August 13

The North American Free Trade Agreement is a tremendous victory for American agriculture, and one of the most significant economic achievements in the post-war period.

And NAFTA is a resounding triumph for our economy and all Americans. Expanded trade will create thousands of new jobs and foster greater economic growth. The agreement also safeguards the environment and ensures that American producers and workers are treated fairly.

For American agriculture, NAFTA means added farm sales. It means an estimated \$2 billion annual jump in farm exports. A two to three percent boost in yearly farm income. And up to 54,000 new American jobs.

NAFTA will open a lucrative market with more than 92 million Mexican consumers. That number is expected to top 100 million in the next five years. Increased economic growth and rising living standards in Mexico make it a prime market for American producers. Our agricultural producers and business owners will find opportunities to expand sales and profits in Mexico like they have in Canada.

The U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement had its critics before it was ratified nearly four years ago. We don't hear much from those skeptics today - and for good reason. Since the free-trade agreement as enacted, our agricultural exports to Canada have more than doubled - from \$2 billion to \$4.6 billion. Canada is now our Number One customer for high-value farm exports, taking almost one-fifth of what we produce. And it took 10 percent of all our agricultural products in 1989.

NAFTA has its naysayers, too. But our trade with Mexico over the past few years makes a strong case for the free-trade agreement. Mexico is now among the fastest growing markets for American exports.

Our agricultural exports to Mexico have more than doubled since the mid-1980s, rising from \$1.4 billion then, to nearly \$3 billion in fiscal 1991. Mexico is now our third-largest customer for agricultural products. These exports have boosted incomes here at home and added more American jobs.

Today, 81,000 American jobs depend on U.S. farm exports to Mexico.

The growth in demand for U.S. agricultural products has been possible because of Mexico's efforts to reform its economy and reduce trade barriers. These and other reforms have contributed to strong economic growth and rising incomes in Mexico.

NAFTA will spur growth in the Mexican economy and expand opportunities for our exporters. Here at home, it will ensure increased prosperity and create new American jobs.

Under a ratified North American trade pact, there will be export gains in:

- Meats - such as beef, pork, variety meats, and sausages;
- Grains - such as corn, wheat, and sorghum;
- Poultry; and
- Horticultural products - such as fresh apples, pears, and peaches. Fresh vegetables and tree nuts also will gain.

Our negotiators made sure that producers of certain importsensitive items will have ample time to adjust to market changes. We will protect these producers by phasing out U.S. tariffs over a longer period of time. Special safeguards for some importsensitive products will limit imports entering at lower duties.

During every phase of the negotiations, our trade negotiators worked closely with American producers, consumers, environmentalists, and others to ensure all concerns were addressed.

These critical consultations and 14 months of tough talks have culminated in an historic accord. It's an agreement that realizes President Bush's vision of free trade and economic growth.

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News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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Leslie Parker (202) 720-0026

UNITED STATES TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FOOD AID TO ZIMBABWE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the United States will provide an additional \$7.5 million in food aid to Zimbabwe.

The food is being provided through a second amendment to the Public Law 480, Title I—Food for Peace Program—agreement between the United States and the Government of Zimbabwe. The measure was signed in Harare on May 29, countersigned in Washington, D.C., on June 2, and amended on July 13.

“The Food for Peace Program is designed to help the people of countries such as Zimbabwe meet their food needs,” said Madigan.

“This donation will allow purchases of around 73,000 metric tons of U.S. corn.”

The Food for Peace Program is a food aid and market development program operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service in conjunction with USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

Title I of the Food for Peace Program authorizes government-to-government concessional sales, which combine low interest rates and repayment terms of up to 30 years on financing to purchase specified U.S. agricultural products.

The supply period is fiscal 1992. Purchase authorizations will be announced as issued and sales will be made by private U.S. traders on a competitive bid basis.

For more information, contact Jim Higgiston or Todd Drennan at (202) 720-5319. For operational details call (202) 720-5780.

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USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR JUNE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for June 1992:

Cost of food at home for a week in June 1992

	Food plans			
	(In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2				
(20-50 years)	49.00	61.80	76.00	94.40
Family of 2				
(51 years and over)	46.50	59.30	73.00	87.30
Family of 4 with				
preschool children	71.50	89.20	108.70	133.50
Family of 4 with elemen-				
tary schoolchildren	82.00	104.90	130.80	157.40
Individuals in				
four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	13.00	15.80	18.40	22.30
3-5 years	14.00	17.20	21.20	25.40
6-8 years	17.10	22.80	28.50	33.20
9-11 years	20.40	25.90	33.20	38.40
Males:				
12-14 years	21.10	29.30	36.50	42.90
15-19 years	21.90	30.30	37.60	43.50
20-50 years	23.40	30.00	37.30	45.20
51 and over	21.30	28.40	35.00	41.90
Females:				
12-19 years	21.30	25.30	30.70	37.10
20-50 years	21.10	26.20	31.80	40.60
51 and over	21.00	25.50	31.40	37.50

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Sue Ann Ritchko, HNIS administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Ritchko said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home."

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones):

—For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

—For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

—For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

—For a five or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

—For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, Human Nutrition Information Service, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

Washington, Aug. 13—John Stevenson, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), the coarse count adjustment and the user marketing certificate payment rate in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Aug. 14, through midnight Thursday, Aug. 20.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

A further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 89 percent of the 1992 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 3.70 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations:

I.	Calculated AWP	46.64 cents per pound
	1991 Base Loan Rate	52.35 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	89
II.	USNE Price	64.25 cents per pound
	NE Price	- 60.55 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	3.70 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will be made. This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price	
NE Price	60.55
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location	12.05
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	155
Average U.S. location	0.31
Sum of Adjustments	<u>-13.91</u>
Calculated AWP	46.64
Further AWP Adjustment	<u>- 0</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	46.64 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment	
NE Price	60.55
NE Coarse Count Price	<u>-55.33</u>
	5.22
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	<u>-3.95</u>
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	1.27 cents/lb.

Because the AWP is below the 1990, 1991, and 1992 base quality loan rates of 50.27, 50.77, and 52.35 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the AWP, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is below the 1992-crop loan rate, cash loan deficiency payments will be paid to eligible producers who agree to forgo obtaining a price support loan with respect to the 1992 crop. The payment rate is equal to the difference between the loan rate and the AWP. Producers are allowed to obtain a loan deficiency payment on a bale-by-bale basis.

This week's USNE price exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound and the AWP did not exceed 130 percent of the 1992 crop year base quality loan rate for four consecutive weeks. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 2.45 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to September 30, 1993. Relevant data used in determining the user marketing certificate payment rate a summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period	USNE Current Price	NE Current Price	USNE Minus NE	Certificate Payment Rate 1/
1	July 23, 1992	67.20 (f)	62.43 (f)	4.77	3.52
2	July 30, 1992	66.25 (f)	61.72 (f)	4.53	3.28
3	Aug. 6, 1992	65.65	61.38	4.27	3.02
4	Aug. 13, 1992	64.25	60.55	3.70	2.45

1/ USNE price minus NE price minus 1.25 cents. (f) based on forward quotations.

The next announcement of the AWP, coarse count adjustment and user marketing certificate payment rate will be made on Thursday, Aug. 20.

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USDA LIFTS REGULATORY BURDENS ON FARM COMMODITY PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today reported a series of actions that will reduce regulatory burdens and improve services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's main farm-program agency, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

"We've made some real progress in cutting through administrative red tape that hamstrings farmers," Madigan said. "President Bush directed government-wide streamlining of regulations last January, and it will remain one of my personal crusades until the job is done."

Among the 14 changes announced today, USDA will make final consolidation of forms required of farmers and ranchers participating in ASCS programs, saving thousands of hours in time-consuming paperwork.

ASCS also will:

—allow either spouse (instead of both) to sign a farm program contract when both spouses own an interest in the farm.

—no longer require liens on all grain stored on a farm simply because grain stored in one farm structure is pledged as collateral for a commodity loan. Producers would not have to obtain a lien release from ASCS before selling their non-collateral grain.

—allow farmers to enroll small farmed wetland areas in USDA's Conservation Reserve and Wetlands Reserve Programs. The new rules would remove adverse economic impacts on farmers imposed by current regulations.

—propose a method for better targeting landlord ineligibility for USDA benefits due to violations of the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

—allow producers of cotton, rice and minor oilseed crops to establish their loan deficiency payment rates without making multiple trips to their county ASCS office.

—provide cost-sharing assistance to producers in arid areas who elect to establish perennial cover on idled acreage.

—change production adjustment terms applied in certain cases to cotton, corn, sorghum, minor oilseeds, crambe and sesame to give producers more flexibility in making decisions about what to plant.

—propose to improve the integrity of the tobacco marketing quota and price support programs through better enforcement, increased dealer responsibility and simplified procedures.

—allow up to 50 percent softwood trees under Conservation Reserve Program lands devoted or converted to hardwood.

—propose to allow haying and grazing during the seven non-principal growing months on the remaining 50 percent of the resource-conserving crops designated as Acreage Conservation Reserve.

—change the definition of "dairy producer" to provide equitable treatment to all dairy producers, and make transfer of milk marketing history retroactive to 1991.

—propose to change the announcement time for the Adjusted World Price of cotton, and allow gin tags to be used in lieu of warehouse receipts when requesting loan deficiency payments.

—propose to change the announcement time for the Average World Price of rice.

For detailed information on specific program changes contact Randy Webber (202) 720-7641.

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REOPENED HEARING SET ON THREE FEDERAL MILK MARKETING ORDERS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has reopened a public hearing for the New England, Middle Atlantic and Pacific Northwest milk marketing orders Aug. 20 in Alexandria, Va., to consider the pricing of Class III-A milk that is used to make nonfat dry milk.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said that a hearing held about a year ago is being reopened in response to an Aug. 4 decision and order issued by Judge Charles R. Simpson III, of the U.S. District Court, for the Western District of Kentucky at Louisville.

"Judge Simpson ruled that the new Class III-A pricing formula tentatively adopted for the three orders cannot be implemented until all interested parties have had an opportunity to address the appropriate yield factor in this formula," Haley said.

While no amendments to the orders have been specifically proposed, the hearing is limited to proposed pricing under the three orders mentioned.

The hearing will begin at 9 a.m. eastern time at the Old Colony Inn, 625 First Street, Alexandria, 22314; telephone (703) 548-6300.

Copies of the reopened hearing notice are available from any of the market administrators, or from the hearing clerk Room 1083, South Building, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. The copies may also be inspected there.

Details of the hearing will appear in the August 14 Federal Register.

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Sharon Scheidhauer (301) 436-7776

USDA TO HOLD LOTTERY FOR USE OF ANIMAL IMPORT CENTER

WASHINGTON, Aug. 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that on Oct. 6 it will hold the annual lottery for use of its Harry S Truman Animal Import Center (HSTAIC) during calendar year 1993. Applications and accompanying deposits must be received no earlier than Sept. 1 and no later than Sept. 15.

Certain animals from countries not recognized as free of foot-and-mouth disease must be quarantined at HSTAIC upon entry into the United States. Because the demand for quarantine space at HSTAIC, located in Fleming Key, Fla., has traditionally exceeded the space available, USDA's Animal

and Plant Health Inspection Service holds an annual lottery to prioritize applications for the following calendar year.

Completed applications and accompanying deposits must be sent to the Administrator, c/o Import-Export Animals Staff, VS, APHIS, USDA, Room 764 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Applications may be obtained by writing to the same address or by calling (301) 436-8170. The lottery will be held in the Epic Room of the Federal Building at the above address.

Notice of the lottery and the application period was published in today's Federal Register.

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PRIVATE EXPORTERS REPORT SALES ACTIVITY FOR EGYPT AND UNKNOWN

WASHINGTON, August 14—Private exporters today reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture the following activity:

—Export sales of 300,000 metric tons of wheat (150,000 tons each of hard red winter and hard red spring) for delivery to Egypt during the 1992-93 marketing year; and

—Export sales of 155,000 tons of corn for delivery to unknown destinations during 1992-93.

The marketing year for wheat begins June 1 and corn Sept. 1.

USDA issues both daily and weekly export sales reports to the public. Exporters are required to report to USDA export sales of 100,000 metric tons or more of one commodity, made in one day, to one destination by 3:00 p.m. Eastern time on the next business day following the sale. Export sales of less than these quantities must be reported to USDA on a weekly basis.

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USDA PROPOSES CONSOLIDATING FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH STATIONS

HOUSTON, Texas, Aug. 17—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today proposed reducing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service research stations from eight to six by consolidating the management of research for Southern and Mountain states.

>Management would be incorporated in existing research stations owned by the Forest Service in Asheville, N.C., for the South, and in Fort Collins, Colo., for the Mountain states. Additional research headquarters for the two areas are now operating in New Orleans, La., and Ogden, Utah.

"USDA is studying the entire field office structure to determine ways of cutting costs, improving efficiency and enhancing service to the public," Madigan said. "The two offices we're proposing to consolidate have had overlapping duties and issues."

The basic scope and direction of research in the affected states would not change, and only a small number of employees would need to be relocated to accomplish the consolidation, Madigan said.

"Cost savings from the proposed action would be \$500,000 to \$1 million annually from each station and would be used to do more research," Madigan said. "Some of that research would be done by working research groups that will remain in Louisiana and Utah."

The money bill that funds the Forest Service requires that any closing of research or regional offices, or change of regional or station boundaries must be approved by the Senate and House Appropriations and Agriculture Committees. Madigan, on Friday, Aug. 14, asked the committees for approval.

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CROP OILS COULD REDUCE COCOA BUTTER IMPORTS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17—A chocolate bar made from the oil of cottonseeds and sunflowers”

U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists say they have found a way to convert these oils into a near replica of cocoa butter—now imported as the primary ingredient in chocolate. Cocoa butter also is used in a variety of foods as well as in products like suntan lotions.

George Abraham, a chemical engineer, and M. K. Chang, a biochemist, said the substitute has 90 percent of the chemical and physical properties of pure cocoa butter. That similarity was confirmed in laboratory tests at the Southern Regional Research Center operated in New Orleans by USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

According to the scientists, the two oils and a commercially available enzyme are mixed in a heating process. The enzyme causes the oils to combine and change into a cocoa butter-like product.

“Cocoa butter, derived from the bean of the cacao plant, is an expensive import—mostly from Malaysia and Brazil—with a fluctuating price,” said Abraham.”There are no domestic sources for cocoa butter.”

U.S. Department of Commerce figures show the United States in the first five months of 1992 imported 41 million kilograms of cocoa butter valued at \$122 million. Cocoa butter imports in 1991 totaled 93 million kilograms valued at \$279 million.

“Our research provides the opportunity for a domestic source of a cocoa butter-like product to reduce imports and expand markets for farmers,” said R. Dean Plowman, ARS administrator.”Also, companies would have another new use for American crops like cotton and sunflowers.”

Abraham said there are ways to convert oils from crops into a cocoa butter substitute without using enzymes. But tests of the cottonseedsunflower substitute’s chemical and physical properties indicate the new process yields a higher quality product, he said.

Other processes relying on enzymes are more complicated than the new one, he said. Also, they use non-domestic oils as starting materials.

He said the new process heats a mixture of cottonseed and sunflower oils and enzymes to 150 degrees F. At that temperature, the enzymes cause a reaction that rearranges the fatty acids in the oils so that they have the cocoa butter-like properties.

Abraham said his studies at the New Orleans center's Food and Feed Processing Unit confirmed that the new process can be "cost effective—it continuously separates the final product and recycles the unconverted material for further processing."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For details contact, George Abraham, chemical engineer, Food and Feed Processing Research Unit, Southern Regional Research Center, USDA, ARS, New Orleans, La. 70124. Telephone (504) 286-4339.

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Randall Green today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 9.50 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 8.64 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 8.63 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 4.75 cents per pound.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, loan deficiency payment rates and gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price level are:

- for long grain, \$0.77 per hundredweight;
- for medium grain, \$0.70 per hundredweight;
- for short grain, \$0.70 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 12:00:01 A.M. EDT until 12:00:00 a.m. EDT Tuesday, Aug. 25. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Aug. 25 at 7 a.m. EDT. The price announced at that time will be effective from 12:00:01 a.m. EDT Tuesday, Aug. 25.

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CHARLES RESNICK NAMED TO SMALL COMMUNITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POST AT USDA

HOUSTON, Aug. 18—Charles Resnick has been named deputy under secretary for small community and rural development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan announced today.

He succeeds Michael Liu, who held that position from June 1991 until last July when he was appointed deputy assistant secretary of agriculture for natural resources and environment.

Resnick will serve as deputy to Under Secretary Roland Vautour and will help in the development of policy for USDA's Farmers Home Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Rural Electrification Administration.

"Charles brings to USDA a documented track record of successes, both domestically and internationally, in senior management positions with 'Fortune 500' companies," Madigan said. "We plan to take full advantage of his background and experience in that arena, as he assumes his new responsibilities."

From December 1990 until his recent appointment Resnick directed the acquisition efforts of Tropicana Products, Inc., based in Bradenton, Fla. In that position he helped expand the company's markets throughout Europe and Asia. Tropicana is the largest processor of oranges in North America.

From 1987 to 1989 Resnick was vice president of the Merger and Acquisition Advisory Department for the Mellon Bank Corp., based in Philadelphia. He worked for PepsiCo, Inc., from 1983 to 1987, where he managed such areas as strategy, planning, performance analysis, and development of agriculturally-based products for the Frito-Lay Co. in Dallas. He also spent six months during that time with Wilson Sporting Goods in Chicago. From 1981 to 1983 he was a manager for The LTV Corp. in Dallas, after having worked in the Paper Products Division of Proctor and Gamble Co. in Cincinnati and Mehoopany, Pa., from 1975 to 1981.

Resnick holds an A.B. degree in biology and an M.B.A. degree in finance, both from St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

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LARGER NATIONAL SEED STORAGE LAB DEDICATED

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18—An expansion of the National Seed Storage Laboratory will mean four times as many seed samples can be preserved to combat future crop diseases and losses to insects, the administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific agency said today at a dedication ceremony for the addition in Fort Collins, Colo.

"We've needed to increase the capacity of the Nation's most important seed vault. Now that has been accomplished," said R. Dean Plowman, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. He said the laboratory, which was opened in 1958, now is home to more than 232,000 seed and plant genetic material samples.

Private citizens, industry executives, Colorado State University administrators and federal government officials today attended the ceremony. It marked the completion of the \$10 million, three-story, 65,000 square-foot addition to the laboratory. Construction began last spring.

Charles R. Hilty, USDA assistant secretary for administration, and Albert C. Yates, CSU president, participated in the ceremony.

"Our new addition will make sure the seed storage laboratory will have room for plant genetic treasures from the United States and from countries that want a backup. We have strengthened the laboratory as this country's only long-term storage facility for plant genetic material," said Plowman.

"Unfortunately, we cannot always preserve the environment where a variety or subspecies of a crop grows," he said. "We are losing unique plants in many parts of the world as natural habitats are destroyed."

"Cultivated varieties go out of fashion, replaced by newer versions. But the gene pools of these wild and cultivated species must not be lost," Plowman noted.

The Fort Collins laboratory is the largest facility in the National Plant Germplasm System which annually distributes more than 190,000 seed samples to plant breeders in some 80 countries, said laboratory director Steve A. Eberhart. Information on each seed sample is available on a telephone linked, state-of-the-art computer network, he added.

Plant breeders all over the world draw on the samples to improve crops. For example, Eberhart said, they may obtain a wild strain of wheat able to withstand assaults by hungry insects such as the Russian wheat aphid, and cross this strain with a wheat variety vulnerable to insect attack but which is weather hardy and highly nutritious.

“While the primary mission of the laboratory is long-term storage,” he said, “scientists here also conduct research to find better ways to preserve seeds and plant materials like pollen, buds and shoot tips for many decades.

“We have discovered how to store seeds more efficiently in liquid nitrogen, for example. That’s minus 320 degrees F., compared to conventional storage in sub-zero cold vaults.” He called the accomplishment “representative of the work that’s made the lab known to plant collectors and breeders all over the world.”

NOTE TO EDITORS: For details, contact Steve A. Eberhart, director, National Seed Storage Laboratory, USDA, ARS, Fort Collins, Colo. 80523. Telephone: (303) 495-3200.

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